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Because it has been said
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Except a loaned book."

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SIX LETTERS TO A PIOUS MAN,

INTRODUCED BY

AN ADDRESS TO BISHOP HUGHES.

BY

KARL HEINZEN.

TRANSLATED

From the German by an American Lady.



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TO BISHOP HUGHES.

An Introduction to the

SIX LETTERS TO A PIOUS MAN.

You are acquainted with the old adage : "Extremes meet". May the word "meet" be applied to a hostile rencounter, or may it serve to distinguish similarities, which present just the most heterogeneous elements, — the old adage will always hold good. In permitting myself, out of favor to you, to be considered the representative of an "extreme", I appear before you, the representative of the opposite extreme, not merely as an adversary, but I am also sufficiently just to acknowledge those qualities on your side, which "meet" mine. It is, above all things, your jesuitical consistency in the pursuance of your aims, to which I would do all justice. Endeavoring, myself, to be consistent in acting as well as in thinking, being convinced, that only consistency can secure the attainment of great ends, and taught, at the same time, by daily experience that nothing in the world is so rare as consistency, I readily acknowledge the same even there, where I see it devoted to a bad purpose. The clear recognition of ends and means, joined to talent and the will, to accomplish the one, by perseveringly employing the other, is ever something uncommon and must always command respect.

If I now begin with the acknowledgement of your consistency, you will certainly smile at my directly following that admission with requesting an inconsistency of you, namely, the inconsistency of stepping, from the province of faith, over to that of reason. But I will facilitate the task for you, in as much as I do not demand, that you shall defend your doctrines with the arguments of reason, but merely that, with them, you shall overthrow mine. As reason, with you, ranks below faith, you have the advantage of availing yourself also of the secondary weapon, to which I challenge you ; and if the "aim hallows the means", with which I perfectly agree, without, however, conceding that your aim is a hallowed one, you will not perceive an inconsistency in my requesting you to advance the lofty interests of faith with the low means of reason.

We live in an age that urges all to Parrhesy, that is, to the necessity of drawing the last consequences, to say the last word, or by deed, as it were, to play out the last trump. In this state of Parrhesy, revolution and reaction stand opposite each other in every province, and all middle positions must be resigned as untenable. As now, within the province of politics, only

red revolutionists and red reactionists are really yet taken into account, thus, within the province of religion, only Atheists or Materialists and Jesuits are of import. Atheism is the Parrhesy of the law of reason ; Jesuitism the Parrhesy of religious faith. Jesuitism is the citadel, in which religious belief must find its last protection — and its grave. No wonder that the citadel is now more strongly fortified than ever ; but the stronger is also the desire to take it or to blow it up. Now, I am not one of those impetuous combattants, who at once attack the scaling ladder ; nor are my inclinations of so subterranean a cast, that I would busy myself with the laying of mines. I am sufficiently humane to content myself with forming a line of rational arguments, that you and your comrades may have the choice of bursting the line with the shafts of reason, or surrendering in silence. The objections at first expected, I will meet in the beginning, in order that the business of refutation may be easy to you ; if, however, you do not refute, then your silence will be the avowal of your defeat.

Consistency demands, that at the extirpation of a tree one should secure the roots and not rest satisfied with chopping off the limbs and branches. It was a fruitless struggle to attempt the annihilation of Jesuitism on the ground of belief. Within the province of belief, Jesuitism does and must remain victor ; it alone is justified, alone consistent and all Protestantism, of an old or new kind, is nothing more than the idle disobedience of the child toward the father. Whoever would attack Jesuitism, must pursue it further than to Father Loyola ; must grasp it at the root of life, which secures to it growth even without Loyola. This root is belief, and the issuing point of belief is "God" ; is that much talked of and all-unknown "being", from whom all existence and nonexistence is said to proceed ; is that authority, which never demands personal respect, and respect to which is only vindicated by others ; is that power now represented as Greatness, now as a Terror, that can do everything, and yet is guarded like an enervated old man ; is that stern Sovereign and Judge, who can see into the hearts and kidneys of all, and nevertheless suffers certain persons in black coats, with fat and flaccid bellies, with short and "long" fingers, without any written permit, nor any document whatever from His cabinet, to nominate themselves His representatives, ministers, generals, police, taxcollectors, privy counselors, adjutants, jailors, yes even his hangmen, in order to govern, exercise, watch, leech, castigate, aye, even to behead mankind in His name.

It is clear, that as long as this wondrous Sovereign exists and is respected, his ministers, generals &c. will have an easy game and, through fictitious cabinet-orders and the imposition of taxes, dispose at pleasure of heads and purses. But if this Sovereign

dissolved to naught, or if he be recognized as the creature of his so called servants, then these also, from the representative down to the hangman will have come to an end ; and well may they rejoice, if deposition be their sole punishment.

You see, Reverend High Shepherd, that I appear against you with all possible honesty. You will call him no common enemy, who challenges you to slay him, that you may remain alive. Do not, however, let yourself be drawn into the error of thinking, that the declaration of my belief, with which in the following letters I shall oppose you, is merely intended to elicit controversy, and that I am only an atheist because you are a jesuit. The sun does not shine exclusively for the purpose of transforming our earthly night into day ; it becomes day even because the sun shines, and it would shine still though our earth were to sink into an abyss of the universe.

The following letters contain the confession of the belief of an "Atheist" in a concise form. They have already existed ten years in the German language and have in vain awaited refutation ; perhaps they will prove more fortunate, having made their appearance in the English language, if you, Sir, famed as a controvertist, will honor them with your attention.

SIX LETTERS TO A PIOUS MAN.

First clear sky, then clear ground !

I.

You condemn me as an infidel. I will give you an opportunity of founding your sentence of condemnation, in as much, as I shall disclose, with all human candor, my inmost thoughts to you. Let us begin with the main point, with the "cause of all things", with your "God". But I must premise the subject itself with a few remarks upon the manner, in which you are in the habit of treating the same.

If you are as consequential in thinking as in acting, you will allow me to point out the contradiction, in which the kind of your god-worship stands to the conception of your „God“. If, namely, you really imagine your „God“ such as you seek to represent him, I must then ask you, who offends him more, I, who deny him, or you, who seek to defend him against me? What „God“ is he, who must be defended by his creature, that kneels, powerless and humble, before him? What „God“ is he, who is endangered by being denied? What „God“ is he, whose anger is aroused, as you assume, by his creature being too blended to recognize him? What „God“ is he, who needs to his rescue the assistance of police or of rabble? What „God“ is he, whose most zealous defenders are the combatants of reason and freedom? Reverend father, I would be justified in doubting your truthfulness, when you say, that you believe in a „God“, for, whoever believes in a „God“, must certainly also form an idea of him, and whoever forms an idea of him, must form a more worthy one of a „God“, than that he should require the protection of populace, priests or police. How will you expect me to believe in a „God“, whom you let appear the abstract, at once, of hate and impotence? You can give your „God“ no greater „testimonium paupertatis“, than by the animosity, with which you watch and persecute the doubts of his existence. You assert, that you are as well convinced of „God's“ existence as of your own. If I should think of denying your existence, you would laugh at me; but if I deny your „God“, you consider him endangered and persecute me. How does this harmonize, „god worshipper“? You unconsciously give to understand, that you assume the possibility of your „God“ being annihilated and

with him the foundation of your spiritual existence and world of belief. You are aware, that you are not the creature of a „God“; but that „God“ is your creature. In this your creature and in your „belief“ in the same, you do not guard „God“, who can not need protection, but your office, your influence, your means of sway, in short your priestly egotism. As long as your „God“ exists, you are a potential man; as soon as he falls, you fall also; you may, from a richly endowed priest, perhaps, become a beggar, from a man of property a vagabond, from a patron of the church a servant, from a general a petty officer, or from a pattern of virtue you may become a scoundrel, that is, a declared one.

Would you prevent me from giving expression to the fact, that I can not believe in your „God“? Would you, in honor of your „God“, make me a liar unto him? Would you maintain, that out of regard for your „God“, one may not think what in accordance with his nature he must think, and not say what he thinks? Are you the censor of your „God“? Think what you can, and believe what you will, and say what you believe; but allow me to do the same, or you will have to admit, that I, without the assistance of a „God“, act more tolerantly and „godly“ than you at the hand and in the name of your „God“. But may you be intolerant and prevent what you will; as little as you can hinder Woman from bringing forth that which she bears in her womb, as little shall you hinder my nature from following out its necessities and setting to light, in comprehensible language, as its spiritual fruit, the creed of a new time.

According to your principles, presupposing their uprightness, it may seem consistent to pity me as one missing the „consolation“ of believing in your „God“; but if, on account thereof, you get angry at me, you act extremely inconsistent, for attempting to compel a man to believe in „God“, is but to strengthen him in his doubts of „God“.

As to the „consolation“, leave it calmly to me, to make out my case with „God“ between ourselves, if you believe, that I shall come in collision with him. If you fear as little for your „God“, as I fear for myself, you can readily grant me this request. But you also must grant it, for if it be an outrage, not to believe in „God“, then you are at most justified in appearing as witness, but not as judge in the case. How can you be judge in the affairs of a being, whom you can not comprehend, and by whom, according to your own assurance, you yourself will be judged? If this being be so constituted as you imagine him to be, you must admit, that he alone is capable of judging his own case, and that he also does not require your testimony.

As with your „God“, you deal likewise with the religion appended to him. You praise its might, its immutability, its un-

shakableness, and yet you cry aloud and complain of the undermining of all „godliness“ whenever it is touched with the knife of unbelieving criticism. Can anything more ridiculous, than this proceeding, be thought of, and can there likewise be a more speaking proof of the insolidity of your own belief? If a boy tells you, that he will dash the Chimborasso to fragments with a pebble, will you prevent him from making the trial? Will your anger be excited, because he gives you an opportunity to convince him of his folly? Well then, you represent your „God“ and your religion as a Chimborasso, and give yourself the appearance of holding criticism for the boy with the pebblestone. Why do you not permit him to arrive at the conviction of the unshakableness of the Chimborasso through his own experience, and by his vain endeavors also to impart his conviction to others? Should you not rather wish for than hate criticism, if you believe in its inefficiency? I must straightway declare to you, that you become a liar unto your „God“ and your religion no less than unto yourself, if you preach ban and flames against those, who give you the opportunity of proving that which you proclaim as your belief. You unweariedly repeat: „They shall not overcome the portals of hell“; but scarcely are the portals of reason opened, and you hold all for lost. With your heavenly affairs, it is exactly the same as with the affairs of earthly gods, who likewise so haughtily boast of their rocklike durability, whilst they do not believe themselves secure in their laughable existence for a week's time, unless through censorism, and by other forcible and false means, they prevent the exposure of their imbecilities. All of you may take axample by me and those like me. What we believe and what we are, we fearlessly and without reserve make subject to each criticism, if this criticism reject but one aid, which we, on our side, as little wish for as possess, and which, you will have to acknowledge, is nowhere more unaptly placed, than at the side of a „God“: I mean the aid of police and rabble-fists!

You say, that which is holy dare not be touched. But what then is holy? How can anything attest its power, the effect of its „holiness“, if from the very first I declare it unapproachable? How can any thing be testet by the „portals of hell“, if from the very first I determine, that it dare not approach them? Is not the assertion of such holiness a bare attestation of weakness? Upon what is this holiness based? Upon the nature of the holy itself—impossible! for if the holy is conscious, that it can bear no touching, then verily, it is not worth being deemed holy. Whereupon then? Upon the will of those, who venerate the holy? Well then, I ask again, whereupon this will is based? Certainly not upon the reliance, that the holy can actually stand the test. What else remains to you in opposition to this assertion, but to permit of the test being made? If you will

not accede to this, if this „holiness” is to depend merely on your arbitration, then I lay claim to the same liberty as you take for yourself, and herewith demand, that my unbelief in your „God” and your religion be likewise considered holy. You speak of freedom of conscience ; would you have it for yourself alone ? Believe me, Sir, my convictions, in certain respects, are more sacred to me, than your belief is to you. The difference merely consists in my vindicating the right of my convictions being tested, and in your vindicating the right of withdrawing your belief from the test. For me, there is nothing in the world more sacred than truth ; and truth wants and demands to be tested.

Pious man, above all things, keep aloof from me with your “holiness”, for “holiness” is nothing but a shield for the despotism of falsehood. There is nothing in the world more sacred than right on the one side, and duty on the other. At these sanctuaries, built on the foundation of truth, you may shake and criticize as you will ; they remain what they are, and reason builds them up again whenever falsehood has destroyed them. But that by right and duty I understand something different from your interpretation, will be subsequently shown.

II.

As long as Man had not become conscious of himself and could not arrive at a closer knowledge of things that were and wrought beside himself, it was quite natural, that he should ascribe all phenomena and effects of nature to a power, which he conceived and magnified according to his own being. Everything thus received in his eyes a supernatural, yet nevertheless from human nature abstracted origin and character ; and as every living being conceives things according to the benefit or injury they do to him, it simply so happened, that miscomprehending Man attributed to all, that met his senses, a design relative to himself, and by which the imagined higher power made known its relation to him. The good weather, that ripened his fruits, betokened the good design of a higher power, and he offered thanks ; the hailstorm, that crushed his fruits, betokened an inimical design, and he prayed for grace. Thus Man arrived at the belief in a “God”. Not the heart, as has been maintained, but interests and miscomprehension have created that which is generally called “God”. God is, in truth, nothing but the unrecognized cause of things, which Man conceived as a potential human, that is, a superhuman being, and which he in his conception gradually so modeled, that he entered into an imaginary relation to the same, not only with his in hope and fear abiding interests, but also with his ideas and feelings. Thus was not only “God” originated, but also the “Father”, the “King of the World” &c.

You perceive at once, from this view of the origin of the god-idea, that it is an impossibility for my understanding, to form a compromising agreement with the belief in your "God". You must therefore advance rational arguments for this belief, and if I am to be converted, you must so settle, and so enthrall my reason, that it can neither out nor in, as for instance is the case when you say : twice two are four. Let us then look at your arguments somewhat closer.

The reasons, which you generally offer for the existence of a "God", have not come in contact with the doubt of "God", but only with the belief in "God", and are therefore no reasons for me. Guided by the principles of reason, I must proceed from the right of doubting all that I cannot comprehend, and then make my belief depend on the arguments, that may arise pro and contra. Not belief, but doubt is to me the magic wand of Truth. Hitherto belief in "God" has prevailed in the world and disbelief becomes opposed to belief. If disbelief had hitherto prevailed, and belief should now take its place, the course of argumentation must prove quite a different one. Imagine to yourself, that no farspread belief existed, that you were about to found the same, found it in an educated world, which from the very beginning recognized only that, which I place in the stead of the belief in "God", and then ask yourself, what reasons you would furnish for this belief? Put this question earnestly to yourself, and you will at least come to exert your reasoning powers more, than the habit of believing has hitherto made necessary to you to do. If you demand belief of me, then I demand, that you will forthwith produce unequivocal evidence of the existence of "God" and fixed views of his being, or else I will continue to deny him "in contumaciam".

There is to be no effect possible without a cause, consequently no creation without a creator. This is the main and in fact the only argument worthy of examination, whereby you and others support and can support yourselves. In reply I must simply remark to you, that I can not admit of a creation, where nothing has been, consequently can only conceive of a change of the already extant, be it by transformation, be it by decomposition, be it by combination, or be it by development of a germ. A creation is a nonsense. You would prove by your proposition, that there once existed no world and that the same was created by a being, whom you call "God". Consequently this being must have existed prior to the world. But, I ask you, where did this being exist, and what existed before him? Who again created this being? You answer: He existed from eternity. Well then, if nothing remains to you for a foundation but this eternity, beyond which I as little as yourself can go, and which does not at all admit of an enquiry

after the prime cause, I then ask, why do you not shorten the process and at once declare : the world exists from eternity? ! If "God" could exist without a cause, then the world could also exist without a cause, that is, be the cause of itself. If you can imagine a "God" who existed without the world from eternity, then you can much easier imagine a World, that existed from eternity without "God". I maintain, that you can as little imagine a "God" without a world, as a "God" beyond the world. Consequently you are obliged, to let your "God" and the world exist together from eternity. But thereby your "God" again gets into a dilemma, because he must have existed in the world and was thus not independent of the world, and therefore no "God". I will spare him this embarrassment ; I make no distinction between this "God" and this world, but imagine to myself simply a world, that has existed from eternity, that in its development has undergone, and still will undergo, many changes. I can not conceive, that this world, or the material for it, did at one time not exist, and that, as you say, it in the course of time grew out of nothing, for, out of nothing can now and never arise a something. If I once assume, that the world, this great "organism" of suns and stars, could have arisen from nothing, then verely there is also nothing to prevent me from letting it arise without the assistance of a "God". But if I would absolutely imagine, that the world was born out of a "God", who, as nothing can proceed from nothing, must necessarily have had all the material for the world within himself, I do not perceive, why I should not rather, instead of that "God", whom I know not where to place outside of the world, take the world itself and consider "God" to be the world and simply declare, that the world was born of itself, that is, developed? The simple solution of your enigma is therefore this, that "cause" and "effect" coincide, that creator and creation are one and the same, namely, the World or Universe.

Further enquiries, as to the manner of the world's development and the primitive matter of the same, lead me into chemical, geological, and astronomical science; in respect to its beginning and its prime-impulse, I come back to eternity, before which you with your "God" stand even as still as I without a "God", as on the whole theology has simply borrowed all its conceptions from common sense, in order to in turn impress them as something higher, in mysterious form upon the same. It no longer condescends to meet the doubts of common sense and proudly shuns its enquiries. Ask yourself for instance, quite simply, where then your "God" remained, after he had created or born the world? Do you imagine him, once again this question, perhaps outside of the world?

outside of the world? Can you do this? Do you perhaps assume, that the world has separated itself from him as a child from its mother? Then I must ask, what became of the mother? You will certainly not assert, that there exists a particular world, wither the creator of our's retired as to a palace, and whence he issues his commands? You say rather yourself, that he is "omnipresent", which idea you have again borrowed from common sense. But if he be "omnipresent", if he be present in all parts of the world, then he cannot get out of it, then he is simply a part of all parts of the same, is inseparable from it, is himself World. There remains, if the word "God" is to be retained, only a worldly "God" or a godly world, but not a god and a world. This little word and decides all. Then say rather, with common sense, that "God" is the world or the world is "God", or be quite consequential and say: the world is—the world, and "God" is a chimera.

In reducing the world to itself, I have, indeed, not solved the riddles, which you commonly propose by extolling the wondrous "guidance" and "preservation", by which instead of the laws of Nature you introduce an independent monarch's will, as though the world were a kingdom after Solomonic pattern. In a word, I have not yet expounded or fathomed the laws of Nature. But apart from this, that not all things can be fathomed, as every investigation but opens the road to new investigations, and the solution of all problems would be equal to the cessation of all development, or to Death, I merely ask, if you can conceive a digression from Nature's laws? Can you conceive a sovereign of the world, in whose will it lay, to remove but a single power of Nature, or compel it to produce an other effect than that which it has hitherto produced? Let your "God" once change water to fire and the earth to water and in a few hours he will have nothing more to "guide" nor to "preserve", not even himself. But if you must admit, that your Lord of the world cannot transpose the laws of Nature, that he therefore, instead of governing, is governed by them, then all the sovereign wisdom, which you would attribute to a monarch independent of Nature, falls down before Nature's necessities. "Wisdom", "order", and organic life of the world are nothing else and nothing more than the simple and inevitable result of the material powers of different elements reconciled by responding combinations.

As I can not think of anything beyond the universe, thus I can also think of no more universes than one. This one, this allcomprising, this unit world, I can as little conceive to be finite in space as in time, and even as little finite in its development. The acme of this development runs into self-conscious-grown spirit and this spirit manifests itself in human-kind. I indeed assume, that on the other celestial bodies there

are also beings, in whom the spirit is manifested in a similar manner, and perhaps in still higher potency, than in mankind ; but as long as mankind comes not in contact with these beings (a contact, which for the rest could afford Man no disclosures running contrary to his development, as otherwise, this development could not have led to these disclosures), it has no other foundation of knowledge, than itself, as it also has no other aim, than its development, which is at once development of the world. But the purpose of its development is nothing else but conscious knowledge and happiness. May Man recognize that his aim is himself, and he then will also attain that aim.

The world is an infinite whole of physical matters and powers existing from eternity. This definition does not at all suffer from the fact, that the elements combined out of chaotic masses and their powers, erst after various revolutions found their proper sphere of action. These powers operating in matter, presented themselves partially as bound, partially as free, thus partially as so-called natural, partially as so-called spiritual powers ; but they are such not from an original distinguishment of Nature and Spirit ; the so-called spirit first formed itself through a cooperation of various natural powers and is, as it were, an extract of Nature. Through this cooperation, Nature, after having further developed herself, first in subordinate formations, the animals, arrives in the form of later originated Man to "consciousness", to "freedom", to "reason", and now disposes of herself, studies herself, cultivates herself, perfects herself with mind. She will also come so far, as to make herself in the form of Man, and that Man will entirely learn to know and govern his being and his mind, in respect to its origin as well as to its constitution. The presentiment of this perfection it was, which gave to Man the idea of an "Omnipotence", an "Omniscience" &c. ; but as he did not yet see them realized in himself, and had not the courage to attribute them to himself, he transferred them meanwhile to an imaginary being, whom he called "God". He had likewise the presentiment of "omnipresence", which signifies nothing else but his connection with the whole of Nature, whose noblest powers, as it were, stream in him together.

As I have already told you, I meanwhile stand still with you before eternity. I accept of it, I presuppose it ; but I even so presuppose the eternity of the existing matter and its powers, with the germ of an eternal development. A reason existing prior to these matters and powers, into which it should have infused existence and development, is to me nonsense. For, firstly, I can not imagine reason as something having an isolated existence, not without these matters and powers ; secondly, if these matters and powers came into existence erst after and through reason, to then receive from it the law of reason, I

must assume, that reason had originally produced them as something unreasonable, which is a contradiction ; and thirdly, reason were very unreasonable, if, capable of existing for itself, it still were to make itself dependent on those matters and powers, in which it first made its appearance.

These observations will make it clear to you, how absurd your assumption of a so-called "providence" is. You assume, as it were, a government existing from eternity, but which, nevertheless, did not exist as long as it had nothing to govern, and which therefore created for itself a kingdom called the world. Is this not absurd ? And still more absurd is the further consequence, namely, that the government which as "allknowing" and "all-wise" must beforehand know to all eternity, what it will do and whereunto it will govern, should still give itself the everlasting trouble of this governing ; thus, in fact, carrying on the business of a frightful, eternal, "godly" ennui. As "allmighty" this government would act far more sensibly, by at once consummating perfection, instead of eternally turning round on its own wisdom, at most for the purpose, as it were, of taking "godly" exercise upon the infinite prairie of omniscience.

III.

As you are aware, there are so-called Pantheists, who take the whole world to be "God". You are partially a Pantheist yourself, since your belief teaches, that "God" is omnipresent. Pantheism is virtually a nonentity and in substance quite similar to so-called Atheism. It shuns denying "God" openly and honestly and thinks to conciliate both parties by placing "God" everywhere, instead of supplanting him by that wherein it places him. It thinks to rescue "God" by getting rid of him in a round-about way. It seems to me like one, who, not at once to do away with the nobility and still not to offend the citizenship, would make nobleman of all the citizens. If I convert the whole world to "God", consequently transfer "God" partially and chiefly into mankind, then it is in reality the same as if I partially convert "God" to Man ; but if I do this, then the personal, specifically different, apart from the world and mankind existing "god", is done away with, and this is just the decisive point. The subterfuge, that there could be in the world a central point, a heart, as it were (which does not however suit to the idea of infinity), in which the world-spirit has its primeval seat of life, and in which it sooner came to consciousness than in mankind, does not at all alter the case. To enter upon such an assumption, it is not denied, that, as the spirit of Man, concentrated chiefly in the head, with the whole human body, thus the so-called world-spirit forms likewise with the body of the

world an undividable whole, and that of this whole mankind forms an inseparable, necessary and equally entitled part. But on this the question just depends. If the power or combination of powers, which, to favor you, I will call world-spirit, has perhaps even before the existence of the human race developed and selfconsciously manifested itself upon another part of the world, in other beings, or by other means, this can as little affect us as if, within the confines of mankind, its spirit had sooner become conscious in Europe than in Africa. The Africans are therefore just as well men as we are. In a like manner our spirit is just as well "world-spirit", as perhaps that spirit, which upon the sun or elsewhere is active and may have already been active before us. Whether we call this "spirit", this exhibition of power, "God", and consequently the human spirit godly, or whether we call it Man, and consequently the god-spirit human, is all the same. The name is of no account, and I only object to the name Pantheism, because with the theological term there is always connected the old idea of a particular, domineering, mysterious being, that annihilates all clear views of life and confuses all conceptions of right, and to which mankind is brought in an unequal, dependent, subordinate, devotional, illegal, humble, unworthy, debased, obligatory, sacrificing relationship. I would also not avail myself of the word Atheism (Non-God-belief), if I could introduce another more suitable term, since Atheism is something merely negative, merely expressing opposition to something not existing. A living being is by no one called a non-deceased being, but simply a living being. Thus an Atheist should merely be called, perchance, a world-man or in short, a man instead of an unbeliever or infidel.

If a "God", as I have said above, is nothing but an expression for the uncomprehended cause of things, then an Atheist is nothing but a friend to the comprehension of that cause. This must be kept in view, in order to estimate the absurdity of those, who would debase the term Atheism to an epithet of disgrace. And further the different points of view must be borne in mind, from which the believers fling forth this word as fulmination. There is a Catholic, a Protestant, a Mormon, a Quaker, a Turkish, an Indian, a Chinese, a Russian, a New-Zealand "God", in short, there are a thousand quite different "Gods", who are of course all true "Gods", consequently all Atheists to each other, not to speak of those who believe in them. In which of all these gods is one to believe in order not to be an Atheist? In the "true" one you will say, and the true one is of course yours, and yours is your imagination or your falsehood. Then, not to be an Atheist I must believe in you, and yet you are (*sit venia verbo!*) a —blockhead or a hypocrite. And consequently, not to be an Atheist, I must in the last instance believe in a blockhead or a hypocrite.

IV.

You thus perceive that I can not imagine or accept of a personal, apart from the world existing, or even from the world and mankind separable and independent being, whom you call "God". I abstract entirely from the idea as from the name of "God" and imagine merely a W o r l d ; but myself with my fellow beings (even as flowers, animals &c.) I conceive as parts and expressions of this world, in w ich it developed and propagated its life ; and indeed, as the acme of this world-life I must recognize the socalled spirit, which is revealed in earthly mankind and, according to my supposition, in other mankinds on other stars. Above the spirit of Man I can know and acknowledge nothing, since t h a t which I know and comprehend, is not above me, and t h a t which I do not comprehend, does not yet exist for me. All that exists for me I must also learn to comprehend, and this learning to comprehend is human development, is human life, is the road to human happiness. For mankind there is no higher aim, there can be no higher aim, than conscious knowledge and happiness, or if you will, mere happiness, as knowledge forms the chief part and the real worth of happiness. But to the attainment of this end Man will be found sufficiently fitted by nature, if, or as, the world is sufficiently fitted to the attainment of its end and Man forms, at his place, an active part, a chief expression of the same.

In thus cutting clear from my conceptions all that you attach to the name of "God", in consequence whereof a socalled theological world no longer exists for me, I of course also cut off all that the mind of Man has through the course of his undefined development attached to that theological world ; thus all that is presumed to have been imparted to him from an outward and to flow back from him to a particular outward source, thus revealed religion and immortality, according to the whilom conception. If no "God" exists or can exist beyond mankind or the world, then he can have revealed nothing to them from beyond ; nothing is revealed to the mind of Man except that, which he developes out of himself or the world. As further the spirit can not have come in the world from beyond, but must have always been in it, thus it can not return to a "God" from whom it did not proceed ; therefore it quietly remains in the world. I too believe in immortality, in as much as I believe in the immortality of the world. But in a personal continuance of Man I of course do not believe, neither does it interest me, having once recognized the impossibility of it. Even to you it must be indifferent, if you do not straight-way believe in the resurrection of the flesh with skin and bones. For from what other motive would you wish your existence continued, if not because you hope to continue, after

death, your individual life, and indeed, if possible, with other human beings, whose individuality is endeared to you? But what forms your individuality? Nothing but the union of your flesh, your blood, your nerves &c. Dissolve this union, destroy but one single part of this organic, corporal combination, and the product of the same, Reverend N., is likewise vanished or changed; and even though you assume a separate continuance of the spirit, after this dissolution, you can only conceive this "spirit" as perfectly indifferent, that is, provided you do not reconnect it with the remaining parts of your personality. I do not imagine the spirit separate, neither in Man nor in the whole World, but consider it as not without existence, and existence not without life, and life not without "matter" and matter again not without life.

But this is Materialism! you will exclaim. Yes, it is Materialism! "Materiatism" in a like manner to "Atheism" has become an epithet of abuse, which is applied by narrowmindedness and illwill to that which they do not understand, or which is inconvenient to them. I maintain that in the world there can be nothing immaterial. And what is lost by it? Is that which we call soul, thought, feeling &c., less soul, thought, feeling, because I do not separate them from matter? Would you have the perfume of the flower without the flower? Abusing "Materialism" is the most stupid thing in the world. As long as it is found necessary to bring the sensitive and material, that is, the existing to be acknowledged and respected, so long there can be no talk of a general happiness and general rationality. As long as people need the ghosts of things instead of their substance, so long will they bother themselves with chimeras. The mind is nothing but the result of an organic combination of physical powers. The whole world is, as it were, a chemical, magnetical, electrical &c., laboratory, in which, the material powers (also called vital powers) consummate their unceasing changes and transformations. Where one formation ceases, another begins. Even the corpse of Man lives; but this is no longer human life, it is only the life of "anorganic" Nature, to which the human form, after its dissolution, returns, and out of which "organic" Nature reproduces itself. There is nothing dead in the world, and dying implies only a retransformation to the material of common life. But if the special spirit, which is the subject of contest, the spirit of a single human being, is to reappear, there must from that material, by way of generation and sustenance, an organic human form be redeveloped; and how you are to imagine the reproduction of all the millions of individual human forms, which have returned to that material, remains with yourself. Where is the perfume of the flower, when the flower is withered? Where is the spirit of Man, when Man is deceased?

With the same right, wherewith you claim a resurrection of Man, I might claim a resurrection of the flowers. And that animals have as much claim to your "immortality" as yourself, is a matter of course.

However, the desire for resurrection after death must decrease more and more, in proportion as mankind learn to properly fill out their lives, to rationally outlive themselves. If they do this, they will depart from Life with equanimity. In sixty years a man can live and experience so much, that he is perfectly satisfied, provided of course, that mankind have erst humanely arranged their social relations. Now the life of most men is but a continuation of troubles and tortures, unnecessarily imposed upon them by their fellow beings. When erst the despots, the priests, the bloodsuckers are done away with, and the conditions of a truly humane life are secured to All, then those, who must take leave of life before their time, without having preenjoyed their "immortality", without having humanely outlived themselves, will belong to the exceptions, whilst now they form the generality.

V.

You have in a rather unexpected manner conquered yourself in permitting me, at least briefly, to say, what in the main points I believe and do not believe, although you perhaps would not have had the tolerance to permit my more fully demonstrating the acknowledgement of my belief in opposition to the whole of yours. Neither will this be requisite, as the criticism of your Christianity is already perfectly exhausted. You now ask me what I have in reality gained, after having cut off your "God", your religion and immortality, after having reduced mankind and the world to itself and deprived Man of the prospect of a "better life,, ?

What I have gained ? Why, all that I need. I can meanwhile think of no greater benefit to mankind, than the loss of their theological ideas and that what they understand by "religion" and "immortality". Think not, that I treat the subject frivolously, I take it very earnestly. I also request you to coolly overcome for a time your fright at my denial of "God" and let go the stupid old-foggy idea, that a so-called Atheist must be a criminal or a monster. Such an idea easily attaches itself to all that appears new or stands alone. But your Christ also at first stood alone, and yet he involuntarily fulfilled that which was his historical task, namely to level by way of the feeling the terrain of the vain "universal Love of Man", upon which reason build up the universal Rights of Man. You will therefore admit, that standing alone forms no ground of argument, and you must know that

there can be times, when a single human being forms mankind. Do not estimate the worth of a man according to the number of his company, nor the worth of a creed according to the number of its votaries. Be assured, that an Atheist can mean better towards his fellowman, than thousands and thousands of adorers of "God", yes, that he must mean better, because he recognises the proper individual Rights of Man. Let me now briefly notice, what the positive result of my negations is.

1. The belief in a master of the spirit is the father of all bondage ; the casting off of this belief is the mother of all spiritual freedom. As soon as the mind recognizes a master, it is no longer master of itself, but simply becomes the servant of the phantasies that it forms about such a master. It has thereby properly ceased to be spirit, for, the legitimation of the mind consists in masterless, in free recognition. There is no greater contradiction, than spirit and "God". There is only one spirit; if that exists above mankind, then it exists not in mankind; but if it exists in mankind, then mankind can not be subordinate to it. The highest in mankind, as well as on the whole, is the spirit. It can, so to express myself, be divided into different quantities, but qualitatively it must be of the same kind. If there were two qualitatively different spirits, the one would know nothing of the other, would stand in no relation to the other, consequently, exist always only for itself. Whoever does not acknowledge this, renounces his spirit in order to make himself the slave of something, which is, at all events, foreign to his spirit. Whoever renounces but a hair's breadth of his spirit, destroys it at the same time, delivers himself up, is slave of him, who takes advantage of his spiritlessness. And in as much as believing Man the bearer of the spirit, which as of a higher kind, as nonhuman, he places above himself, can ever imagine but a Man and acknowledge one of his fellow men, so in practice the god-belief becomes slavish belief and god-worship but priest-worship.

2. If mankind turn their eyes from a being and a world, which exist not, and cast them upon themselves and the actual world, they will learn to recognize their position, their task, their worth, and direct their care to themselves alone. They will learn to perceive, that they are an entitled, a highly entitled part of the world and not an unentitled race, who exist merely by charity, having to thank for, or even sacrifice their right of happiness to an imaginary "Lord". They will learn to recognize themselves as their own Lord and their own aim. They will learn to direct their endeavors solely to their happiness, when they have unlearned to look at unhappiness as their highest obligation; they will learn to seek their happiness here, when they perceive, that it is never and nowhere else to be found. They will learn to recog-

nize, that it is folly and crime to neglect a happiness which has its source only in themselves, and that this crime may cease, they will make of human happiness a common human cause; they will learn to have a solidary care for human happiness. They will learn to hold together after they have recognized, that they are confined to themselves, and they will consciously strive towards their designation as soon as the circle of their consciousness circumscribes them in discernable proximity, and the misty sphere of phantastic conceptions is vanished. They will make that which you call Christian Love, to Truth, and Christian Love will be transformed to actual Love of Man. They will direct love to themselves, the love which above all you would have transferred to an unapproachable being, a being, to whom, if he could exist, such love must evidently be very indifferent.

3. When the belief in a "God" has ceased, every obligation, which you would impose on Man towards "God", will also cease, and only the duty of Man towards Man will remain. Morality will be simplified, and partially quite transformed; theological morality will become human morality. This morality will no longer know any other duty than that which one human being has to fulfil towards another; the common Rights of Man will be recognized as the source of these duties, and in the nonfulfilment of these duties, the expedient of appealing or referring to "higher duties" will be entirely cut off. No so-called higher duty can further come in collision with the duties towards fellow men, as little as a so-called higher right can come in collision with the rights of Man. Neither a despot nor a priest may longer appeal to the "grace" and the "will of God", when depriving men of their equal rights and plundering and misleading them to other ends than those which stand prescribed on the way of their human happiness; the theological order of rank among mankind, by which some are raised like demi-"godly" beings in an artificial nimbus above others, will be deprived of its fundament and fall together. Is that debasing culture of human gods, called majesties, anything else but a reflection of the god-belief? Does not the oppression and the degradation of the god-belief transplant itself from the man at Rome as well as from the man at St. Petersburg and all the other masjesterial set, through all grades of society down to the sexton and the body-guard? Does the degradation of European peoples rest virtually on another foundation than, for instance, the degradation of the Chinese? Is not the political as well as the social life of the whole civilized world still impregnated and corrupted with the fictions and debasements of theology? Is theology not the means by which everywhere one part of mankind outwardly elevates itself above Man in order to degrade the other part below Man? Would there be an

emperor of Russia, if there were not an imperial Russian Lord-God? Would the people cover themselves with the ignominy of sacrificing their freedom and happiness to such a man, if they had destroyed the nimbus in which he exists and sanctifies himself? This whole edifice of human degradation must and will be hurled assunder. The old puppet show of thousands of years, with its whole superstructure and appurtenance, in which the high puppets, called Majesties, Holinesses, Eminencies, Excellencies &c, are strung up on "godly" threads, and to the prolonging of their comedian existence press from the people the slave-tax of sacrificing admiration, must and will tumble together.

If there were only one single human being in the world, could this one human being commit evil deeds? In no wise, because he could injure the rights of no other human being or misuse him to ends contrary to humanity. Towards trees and stones evil deeds are not committed; only in the relationship of one human being to another are vile acts possible. Consequently, human morality is nothing but the law of mutual respect for the Rights of Man. Man, perhaps, might be immoral for himself, as far as immoral implies an injury to reason and human feeling, an insult to the honor of Man. Free, spontaneous direction from the one, but free self-government from the other side, is the right and the left of morality; and the command of that self-government consists with the individual man in the regard for his reason and his human honor, besides, in relationship to others, it consists in the respect for the common Rights of Man. In all that does not infringe on this command, Man is perfectly free, and this is the crown of his existence.

4. As morality is no longer attached to an imaginary being, to whom are ascribed all sorts of unnatural demands, the command of Nature will thus be emancipated and the road to happiness freed of all those hinderances, which consist in something apart from the regard for fellow beings and human honor. As soon as morality is reduced to the basis of human rights, "evil" will only yet consist in the degeneration of human egotism which turns itself against fellow beings; and that mysterious evil, that evil for itself, which has caused you and those of your kind so much trouble, and with which you have so long worried human nature, is abolished. The art to make "evil" of that which is necessary and natural, has thereby also ceased. Recollect, in order to arrive at clearness upon the subject, but the renowned fall of your forefather Adam. If you will be candid, you must admit, that in reality there is nothing else to be understood by this fall, but the sexual act, by which Adam and Eve (these

persons accepted as first parents) laid the foundation of their posterity. Now ask yourself, wherefore and how far this act could have been a sin? Without that fall, the good Adam could not have put the posterity, who are said to have inherited from him the sin of procreation, into the world. Should he not, in order to have avoided that fall, have dispensed with the posterity, to the advantage of whom this avoidance should be? Is it not the grandest absurdity for this posterity to desire, that their forefather should have made them without making them? And does not the stamp of this nonsense, this immoral morality, which with its harpyian filth pollutes even Love, the fairest relation of human life, imprint itself, even yet today, upon the conceptions of millions of fearful believers, who, at the command of their priests, were capable of perceiving a "Sin" even in their eating and drinking, yea, even in their very existence? What confidence and what pride can he have in mankind, who ascribes its origin to a sin? By this single conception, the whole world and all life is, to the believer, already empoisoned. Therefore are such contemptible doctrines actual moral poisoning. Aye, pious man, it is perfect desecration, to brand mankind with the stamp of sinfulness, in order to win, for gold and servility, the merit of its purification. From this example you may comprehend wither it leads, if one convert the gross fables of a childish, to the dogmas of an advanced world, and make "Sin" the cloak for want of knowledge or the means of speculation. But the source of all these errors and futilities is the belief in a "God", in which Man transplaces his follies and his passions, first to make them "holy", and then tyrannize others with them. You will know, that the "fall of Adam" is not the only absurdity and inhumanity distinguished by your theological moral. But human morality does not think of gaging and disforming Nature; it rather makes her the law, under the supervision of the common Rights of Man and human honor (reason) which she adorns with the crown of Beauty.

5. As morality only yet consists in the command of respect for the rights and dignity of Man, thus immorality will only consist in the infringement of these rights and dignity of Man. Those will consequently be the worst men, who curtail the rights or the means of happiness to their fellow men and degrade them to means for selfish purposes. Henceforth "sinners" will be sought elsewhere than hitherto. The "egotists" will be the greatest sinners, and those will be the greatest egotists, who, on account of their personal interests, rob the greatest number of human beings of their rights and means of happiness. But human rights and the means of human happiness consist in liberty and the proportionate division of the goods of this earth. Whoever robs us of freedom and curtails our means of human existence and human

happiness, commits the highest crime there can be; he is an enemy to mankind and the friendship of "God" can no longer rescue him. A "higher" tribunal no longer speaks him free, and we alone form the tribunal, who judge him. Look around in your circle, count the number of your pious enemies of freedom, and you will be affrighted at the piles of acts of endictments, which arise at the moment when theological morals are abolished and human morals introduced. You will be appalled at the number of those, who hitherto in the name and under the protection of "God" have oppressed, misused, plundered, enslaved, tortured, murdered their fellow beings, and in short, swindled them of Life and the aims of Man. You will recognize that the colossal, and at the same time "legitimate" crimes of these enemies of mankind, measured according to the usual criminal code, must call down a frightful judgement upon their heads. At the thought of them, I see the sin-scale in the hand of Themis spring sky-high into the air, and all the guillotines of the world begin to tremble. But not in vain does Themis bear her scales, as little as her sword, and she will hold her day of judgement. On this dreadful day all the criminals against mankind, who thought they could authorize and save themselves by a "God", will be dealt with. Was there ever a criminal, a villain, a tyrant, ever a bandit great or small, whose legitimation and support was not called "God"? "God" grasped in the pockets of the oppressed, "God" sucked them to their very blood, "God" threw them into dungeons, "God" swang the scourge of the jailor, "God" guided the stroke of executioner, "God" was the commissioner, the patron, the reserve, the deputy, the agent, was the consecrator of all villainies, all perjuries, all robberies, all revengefulness, all deeds of blood and of all bestiality and horrors, that ever were committed. In India there are hereditary bandits versed expressly in the art of strangulation, who commit vast numbers of the most frightful murders. Before court they seek to justify themselves as having been appointed to their business by "providence", and that they are but tools in the hands of "God". And exactly so do the hereditary, benign bandits with crown and tiara, who let whole nations be trodden under foot, plundered and butchered by armies of murderers and executioners in the name of "God". A day will come, when this abominable "God" will drown in the blood of his abominable proteges, who have invented him as a means of deception and as the protector of crime. There will come an actual "day of judgement", when all human beings will arise and all unhuman beings will tumble in the pit, and for this day, pious man, you also may tremble.

To men of faith it will gradually become clear, wherefore their pious enemies are so zealously devoted to bringing them up in the "fear of God", making them what is called religious, and

sustaining them in the belief of a "better life"; it will become clear to them, why just in the worst States and by the worst governments "God" and "religion" are the most put under the protection of the police, and why just those are persecuted by despots and priests with dungeon and bans, whose aim it is to humanize Man and free him from the dependence on a tyrannizing belief in mysterious powers, in the name of which by their earthly representatives, he is robbed of his happiness and dignity; it will become clear to them, that with the belief in those powers the floor will be drawn from under the feet of their pretended representatives also, and that, as long as this floor is secure, all struggle against despots as well as against priests, against the oppressors of nations as well as against Jesuits, will remain fruitless, as not touching at the root of the evil. It is lamentable, reverend father, to see how you and your colleagues are attacked from all corners, whilst at the same time the field, wherein the weeds grow, is zealously worked, fructuated and protected. But so it yet is in the world, that the obedience of believers may occasionally be enforced by the thread of freeing them from the oppression against which they rebel! Do we not yet daily experience, that when a congregation gets into a quarrel with its pastor, the oxen permit themselves to be decoyed by their shepherd locking up the stable of the Church, for which they themselves have paid, and then retiring poutingly like a monarch, who chastizes his residence with his displeasure? Why does it not enter the mind of any of these congregations, to let their pouting pastor go as he pleases, or chase him to the devil; in any case show him, that they can live without him and his church, and that without him they find themselves much better off than before. The answer to this question is easily found; you, reverend father, and your colleagues are consequential and "wise", but your congregations condemn themselves to eternal imbecility and stupidity.

6. The belief in "God" has hitherto been the seed of all slashing discord among men. The different modes of worshipping an imaginary being has caused more war and destruction among mankind, than all the differences of egotistical interests. With the belief in "God" the basis of all religious enmity vanishes, and in its place arises the basis of human equality and of universal peace. All wars have grown upon two kinds of ground: upon the political ground the "kingly" subjects combated for their earthly, and upon the religious ground the "godly" subjects combated for their heavenly despots. And as upon the political field the bond of nations is founded by the annihilation of majesty and subjectdom, thus, by the annihila-

tion of god-majesty and beliefdom upon the religious domain, is founded the bond of humanity.

VI.

After having briefly heard what I have won by the renunciation of the belief in "God" &c., you will also wish to know, how I intend replacing that which is pretended to have thus been lost. I must openly declare to you, that this request appears to me somewhat childish, as I find it difficult to reconsider all those presuppositions of a belief, which I have so long and so totally outgrown ; yet to favour you, I will enter upon a few of the main points, as I do not resign the hope, that at least some interest in Truth will be at the bottom of your questions. You fear, that "inward contentment " will be lost. But I maintain, that it will be secured. Accept of it as an uncontrovertable law, that he, who is capable of arriving at knowledge, is also capable of bearing it. But not only this. The more knowledge, and the more regulated it is, the more and more securer will be the contentment. As long as I was still divided between the belief, wherein I was brought up, of another world with its pretended "Lord", and the penetrating doubts of my reason, I experienced a perfect martyrdom of soul ; since I have beaten a clear path through the domains, which gave birth to my doubts, I have become something whole ; I have become a man firmly settled in myself and contented, so far as Man ever struggling for clearer knowledge can and, I would say, dare be. Believe me, there is more solid ground for contentment in the consciousness of being an entitled, selfsubsisting member of the whole great world, advancing independent of all arbitration freely along the road of the immovable laws of Nature, than in the belief of following in blind dependence an incomprehensible power, and indeed unto an end, whereof no believer can have a conception. But this consciousness will become the firmer a basis of contentment, the more generally it penetrates mankind, the more mankind in themselves are supported by it, the more they reciprocally bear themselves. It is not sufficient, that an individual is in harmony with himself, he must also find harmony in his relations to his fellow beings. Now the inimical attacks of those, thinking differently, are already sufficient to embitter the contentment, many a one has found in knowledge. Whoever, compelled by the law of his reason and with the purest motive, is striving to free men from their false conceptions and direct them to their true position, will indeed, when all around he sees his endeavors arrested by the apprehension and persecution of those, for whom he labors, have to consider his personal happiness as a secondary affair, unless he find it alone in the consciousness and possession of Truth.

When he has rid himself of all, that supports the common man in his afflictions, and now instead of those sought men, to whom he would transfer all stay and consolation, sees but enemies before him; if he no longer has a "God" and now also finds no Man; if he set all and all upon mankind and only meets with such as are too stupid to comprehend him, or too egotistical to do him justice; then, indeed, he must have brought his views of life and character to an elevation, whereupon he is inaccessible to all temptations of enervating imbecility and reserved melancholy. It is not every man's business, to go through such trials. The most rather become hypocrites, leaving an open acknowledgement be for times, when sufficient security for the free expression of the same will have been obtained by the struggles of others. It is, however, a matter of course, that this standing alone and subject to assailment is a position, which must be occupied and borne by some, even though personal misfortune really be their fate. It will then at least be recognized, that the source of such misfortune lies not in the doctrine taught, but in the inhumanity of those, who miscomprehend and persecute the same. But persecution, and again persecution, pious man ! The fear of this persecution alone it is, which prevents thousands from trusting themselves to better convictions. Most men fear nothing more, than making an acknowledgement of that which would do them most honor. Is this not strange ? Not the ridiculous fear of the tortures of hell, the day of judgement, and such like nonsense, but the fear of those who believe in such godly absurdities, or hypocritically speculate with this belief, it is, which prevents thousands from forsaking the ranks of the "faithful". And this is, what you call contentment ? From my heart I pity those poor "Contented", who in the eternal fear of their "God" and their fellow-beings keep an account of "Sins", they do not commit, and hold those, which they commit, for virtues. Be assured, that progressing mankind will not miss a "God", when it is once no longer educated with the belief in him, and that the more it will have learned to seek the source of contentment within itself, the more contented will it be. It will, indeed, be long before mankind in general have so far progressed ; for you and your likes have in all directions so peopled the world with such images of terror, that a whole ocean of the Lethe waters of a better knowledge must be consumed, before they are all forgotten. Your "God" you have made the apparition of the whole world, and your belief is nothing but a universal belief in apparitions. Yes, in relation to mankind, "God" is for you, as it were, the police chief of the world and your morals nothing but "godly" fear of police. And with the belief in hobgoblins, and by fear of police, you would lead mankind, endowed with reason and

born to freedom, to contentment? If I were not forced to pity you, there would nought remain for me, but to detest you.

On the other hand, you are of the opinion, that the unfortunate and the weak would lose their last stay as soon as they are deprived of their faith in a "heavenly father". But asside from other things, you must consider, that as mankind withdraws from this belief to itself, it also makes corresponding advances in science and in the endeavors to lessen the misfortune, to which that belief is to serve as a support. If we but erst come to generally possess the means of happiness, namely freedom and a title to the goods of this earth, then a great number of those, who in need and oppression are referred to another world, will have vanished, and they will rest more contented in the lap of mankind than in "Abraham's lap". Do but recognize, that mankind itself it is that creates the unhappiness, to the endurance of which it takes refuge in an imaginary world. But if unavoidable and undeserved misfortune, which happens and always will happen to the individual, be spoken of, then again it is mankind that consoles and repairs the same as far as it can, and such a reparation of human love, which to a fellow-being is guaranteed by an imperative right, by the right of reason, and not adjudged to him by humorsome excitement of feeling, is, I should think, something more real and effectual, than the vague belief in a reparation after death through an unknown being.

How little true human love, in spite or on account of referring to "higher" instances, has gained footing and has effected, may be seen by the state of human rights. Do you not at all ends and at all corners hear love preached by weakheads and scoundrels, whilst they carry on or approve of the abrogation of human rights in millions of individuals? Has not socalled human love hitherto been the hidden enemy of human rights, of which it should be the realization or the precedent? What is human love without securement of human rights? A lie, a detestable and Man-murderous lie, the most desecrated lie of the whole world. But this lie will be destroyed as soon as mankind returns to itself. We will and must arrive at another love, than the confused, sickly, sorrowful, weakly, sentimental, or even perfidious belief-love, which either consists in fruitless words, or exaggerated itself in ascetism, or as disguised lovelessness makes Man unhappy. We must have a fresh love, a love become life and flesh, a love proceeding from free consciousness, based upon solid ground, and which is the expression of the common feeling of the rights and duties of human society footed in itself. Can there be a greater and a truer love of Man; than that which would have all just desires of all men brought to acknowledgment and realization? But not thus does the Christian, only the purely human, the Athe-

istical love of Man, which flings off all nonhuman views and duties, and will, as socalled "Socialism", reconstruct society. Mankind will not become really humane in its aims, until it becomes really humane in its conceptions. All non-human, consequently all theological views are contrary to humanity, are from the bottom in human, and can only lead to inhumanities. To pretend to be "humane" in the name or with the idea of a "God" is to pretend to be free in the name or with the idea of a despot. But if all theological phantasty be cut off from mankind, that is, if nothing be imagined above it, which exists not, then will Man erst become humanly free and purely human, will learn to respect Man as such, ascribe to him no fictious "Evil" and "Sinfulness", and make him his own Master, Ideal, and Aim. That which is sacrificed to "God", is withheld from mankind. Sacrifice the "God", and the Man is won. Only by letting go the belief in "God" is that attained, which through that belief it was hoped would be obtained.

Therefore do not be anxious, that in assailing your theological human love, I have a love in sight, which in reality amounts to the same. I will even acknowledge to you, that the love, which I mean, is little or not at all founded upon actual sacrifice, but upon egotism; not upon undefined feeling, but upon cool understanding. Only upon this ground does it prove something firm and durable. A real love I only know of in the relations of single persons; a general human love I know not. And yet I preach it? And yet, after having combated and accused others of egotism, I would make egotism a maxim? Aye, egotism is the soul of the world. It is the first necessity, it is Life. Can you imagine a man, who has no idea of himself, who works not for himself, who proceeds not from himself, who acts not according to his motives, and yet lives? I can not. He would be a stone and not a man. Consequently egotism is the basis of existence, it is existence itself. But since I acknowledge this for my person, I am, by force of reason, absolutely obliged, to acknowledge it likewise for my fellow-beings, who stand to me in homogenous and equally entitled relationship. Reason, that tells me this, proclaims to me further, that according to its nature it cannot be satisfied, until each single egotism has attained its righteous validity and realization. If upon this motive alone I found my human love, it is more firmly based than upon your "godly" commands. This motive tells me: "That which you would have done or left unto you, that shall, that must you likewise do or leave unto others, if you would not by your reason and conviction be condemned as a barbarian and as unworthy". Your bible indeed says something similar, but with you it is only the expression of a vague

"love", which, without the establishment of equal common rights, has no substance and is subservient to the whim of the moment or, under circumstances, turns its back upon the beloved fellow being. Your love says at the same time : Render unto Caesar the things, which are Caesar's ; but nowhere does it say : Render unto Man the things which are Man's, namely his equal common right to freedom and happiness. Now, I would render nothing unto "Caesar" as little as unto "God" and his servants ; but unto Man I would render All. Thus I would completely satisfy his egotism, on condition, that he would concede the same to the egotism of each one of his fellow beings. This is true egotism and, at the same time, true love of Man. I make each human being an egotist, but I dispute his right of trespassing on the province of another's egotism.

I thus leave each one the liberty, that I would have myself ; and as those single liberties come to an understanding upon a moral basis with each other, a moral, a human condition is originated. I, for instance, can not feel myself happy in loving a woman, who does not love me ; I can have no man for my friend, who at the same time would be my servant ; I can not wish to exert power over my fellow beings, if they do not voluntarily transfer this power to me for common ends ; I can not feel myself happy in affluence, whilst seeing my equally entitled fellow beings in misery ; I can not rejoice in my freedom, when I behold my fellow Man in slavery. I must see them likewise happy, likewise free and if it were merely on account of my own person. My egotism will so have it, must so have it. Or is Reason with its demands not to be considered as belonging to Man, not to the person, not to egotism ? Shall only my stomach have wants and not my reason ? That egotism may become reasonable, is the sole question and the sole aim. If the egotism of all men were so refined and educated, that they could only be satisfied by justice towards all, would there yet be railing at egotism ? Napoleon's egotism urged him to enslave men ; Robespierre's egotism urged him to liberate them ; Christ's egotism urged him to "love" them. It depends always only on the kind and the purpose of the egotism, namely, whether it pursues an aim, that is merely to the good of itself, or whether it pursues an aim, that is to the good of all. In as much as my egotism requires, that I should be free and happy, it also requires, that all other human beings should be free and happy. You thus perceive that my egotism and my love of Man are vastly different from that theological love and that rude egotism, which so well know how to reconcile to themselves the subjection, the subordination and sacrifice of millions of strange egotisms, millions of strange lives, that are homogenous and equally entitled to them. A man of your kind could quite easily be the emperor of Russia or a similar

friend of mankind ; a man of my kind as the emperor of Russia would have to be the first to rebel against himself.

You fear, that with belief the basis of conscience would fall together. I maintain, that true conscience will then erst appear. Reconsider that which has just been said. What do you understand by conscience? Your conscience is imagination and fear ; my conscience is reason and honor. The more free and irresponsible Man is placed upon his own feet, the more faithfully and proudly will he himself guard the responsibility, which reason and honor have impressed on him. Therefore is that man doubly unworthy of freedom, who perceives in it the atmosphere of frivolity. Freedom is not only disenchantment, it is also humanization, and there is no free man, who were capable of being rude or vile. Yes even the frivolous also escape not the condemnation of conscience ; for reason can not annihilate its own effects. By conscience I mean the sensation of contradiction, in which Man comes with himself as soon as he sins against reason and human dignity, or against the common rights of Man. This contradiction disturbs and annoys the reasonable and morally trained person, like a chemically heterogenous infusion agitates a fluid, and the propensities and necessities of his nature urge him to expulse the contradiction. As feeling struggles against pain, so reason struggles against irrationality. It must struggle against it. This, reasonable Man would even perceive, though the contradiction between reason and unreasonableness did not repeat itself in the social misrelations, in which a transgression of reason and right place Man to his fellow Man — a misrelation, that will erst then exert its whole power of retribution, when the infringers of right and the infringed can no longer be brought by lies and belief in authority, to smother the laws of Nature. With your conscience the greatest crimes against mankind may be glossed over, if I but succeed in passing on them a sentence of your dogmatic wish-wash as legitimization. But purely human conscience, the control of which is held by free, never silent reason, glosses over nothing, nothing at all, that comes within its province. You must straightway date your religious conscience from the "devil", instead of from "God", if you reflect upon the shameless acts and inhumanities of every kind, which it has not only suffered to be committed, but even sanctioned and still daily sanctions. Pure, human conscience has, as long as the world stands, never yet approved of an inhumanity, and its only "sin" has from all time consisted in its abandoning and casting off the basis of your sinful theological conscience.

Narrowmindedness sometimes gives rise to the apprehension, that when the people no longer believe in a theological world and in immortality, they will ravish their lives in beastliness and

let go the reins of the rudest egotism. I will say nothing thereof, how rude it is to generally refer Man with his morality not to reason, but to fear ; but I leave you to reflect on the folly of the presupposition that a people, no longer believing in those things, will be the same people, that is now feared. The total stripping off of such a belief is not consummated in a day. But wherever it takes place, there it is necessarily connected with a transformation of the whole manner of conception and with an education, that holds distant all fear of bestiality gaining ground. The populace never will, of this one may be assured, grow wild through unbelief, just because it is no longer populace, when it once really abandons belief. This, the pious guards of morality had better consider, apart from the fact, that even in the worst case an atheistical populace would be capable of no greater vices and crimes, than the most religious daily present to our eyes.

You further fear, that with the belief in "God" &c., "higher contemplation", "higher aims", "higher development" will be lost unto Man. I maintain, that through the doing away of "belief" he will erst become possessed of them. Ask yourself, if your belief has been able to conceive of anything higher than that, which in *S t a t e*, in *S c i e n c e*, and *A r t* the mind of Man has brought to light ? In what do the praised high contemplations in the province of your belief consist ? What is the *substance of the same ? Tell me I pray ! The highest, at which you arrive, besides your carnival-like, tasteless and senseless hocus-pocus of ceremonies, is the misty conception of a being, to whom you ascribe the highest degree of human qualities, and of which you hope, that it may lead you further than your belief, namely, to knowledge in wisdom. But I tell you, even presupposing the existence of a "God", that you will once not have the slightest right, much less a reasonable ground for that hope, since you forcibly suppress cognition in order to once — attain it. Why do you not rather abandon belief and begin at once to recognize, as far as it is possible for you to do ? How do you come to the absurd division and the conclusion, that we must "here" dispense with cognition in order to be fitted for it "there" ? If your religion promise contemplation of "God", why do you not at once enter upon this contemplation ? It will be proven, that in the "contemplation of God" nothing can be lain but the cognition of the world ; and this cognition it is, of which you want to know nothing. You adhere to the theological principle, that in life one must endeavor to be a blockhead in order to become a wiseacre after death. Such a belief would be thought very strange, if it were not known, that just the wiseacres support it in order to have at their disposal the requisite number of blockheads. These are, indeed, pretty "higher contemplations", by which from the onset all other contemplations

are imprisoned. But I hold other views of the way of human development. I know, that Man is only of account during Life, that nothing exists but the world, that consequently Man can have no other aim as well as no other subject of cognition, than again the world and life in this world, and that nothing can afford higher contemplation, than again the world.

But Science is the stream, upon which the recognizing mind of Man is borne through this world ; the State is the ground, upon which men stamp the general consciousness of their position and secure the general conditions of their existence ; Art is the province for the infinite creative power of the spirit of beauty. What more do you yet wish for, worthy man ? What can you yet wish for, after having totally cultivated and exhausted these three provinces ? Look around and ask yourself, if there is not a worthy field presented to you for mental labor ?

And now look not only to the past, look also to the future ! Inquire into the history of human inventions, discoveries and general progress, in short, the spiritual development of the human race in all directions and provinces, and discern, that after these preparatory labors and acquisitions an infinite succession of progressions may still be seen in advance as the elevating task of the human mind ; that there are no boundaries set to the development of the spirit of Man, and that upon each ascended hill of Knowledge, a higher and fairer hill presents itself to view ! But keep two things in sight. First do not at once demand a complete, perfect knowledge, for herewith you demand simply a state of death, something impossible, that alone should cause you to doubt in a "perfect" and "allknowing God" ; secondly estimate duely the visible and tangible world, beyond which you would assume a mysterious spirit or specter-world. Consider how much yet remains in the tangible world for Man to think and to do. Lose yourself for instance in the myriads of stars, that move in the infinite space of the world ; imagine that an acquaintance with these stars, yes, perhaps an intelligible communication with the inhabitants of the same, is yet reserved for Man ; in short, let your phantasie roam wherever you wish.

The projects, that have arisen, of navigating the air, have been ridiculed. I hold this ridicule to be very shortsighted. I can very well imagine, that when mankind have erst more filled out the sphere of knowledge, presented to them by the earth, they will by the help of new inventions, which always keep pace with other knowledge, look more closely on the world around them, to which they likewise have their indirect claim. "Nil mortalibus arduum". That America was discovered, that with a thimble full of powder one may, at a thousand paces, have the life of a human being in power, that a louse may be

magnified to the size of an elephant, that water-steam would take the place of a racehorse, that by means of an iron wire, thoughts may be sent with the swiftness of lightning thousands of miles through the world, that the weight of the sun may be computed &c. — who in times past would have deemed this possible? Now we find it so natural, that we can scarcely comprehend the former disbelief. But it suits the turn of certain persons, to always preach humility and impotence of mind; and those, who would fain once let the earth stand still, would much to well like to have our reason also brought to a stillstand.

In viewing the progress, that human cognition has already made, you need not fear in any respect, that its sphere is too narrow and that, to a due expansion of the same, belief in superworldly or superhuman help is requisite. That which you recognize or conceive as yet recognizable, let suffice you as belonging to the world, and quit the childish artifice of underlaying all you observe with a particular impulse, or a particular support, instead of a life and a law of Nature (as also the unworthy weakness of forming a world of belief, because there is still a world of Problems).

That childishness, which can not see lightning without conceiving a spirit-hand, that sped the flash, and not hear thunder, without imputing it to the wrathful voice of "God", and not behold the setting of the sun, without seeing in its rays the coquetry of a "creator" with the "adoration" of his human children — that childishness, that can take nothing for itself and in its true substance and natural combination, but must assume back of all a spectre-like or theatrical mystery, has with time become too stale, that it should be made a retreat for the lofty views of "God-belief". Fear is the mother of your "God", and want of reflection the father of your fear. Do you seek a godly mystery in the roast, that you eat? Do you perchance think, that in it is revealed a bit of wisdom, goodness &c. of the creator, that sinks into your stomach? Daily usage and tangible familiarity has delivered you from the veneration of a theological roast, or ham; it has become something quite natural and explicable, although at the bottom, it has the same claim to "higher contemplation" as every other object of nature. Well then, there is nothing standing opposed to your becoming more or less familiar with lightning, with thunder, with the sun and the whole world in a similar manner as with the roast. If there erst exist the familiarity, the knowledge, if there but exist the presentiment of knowledge, to which there is just no limits set, then will theology also vanish, as the removal of theology but opens the way to that knowledge. The abolishment of theology is the entrance of Man as proprietor into the infinite world, wherein he has hitherto been but an antechamber-slave. Herewith the

path of the spiritual conquering of the world, of "higher contemplation", is opened, but not, as you opine, cut off. Not the deeper Man is lowered, but the higher he is exalted, the higher he stands. This truth is comprehended by the dullest school-boy, but not by the most learned theologian.

Pious man, give me your hand, and let us traverse the immensurability of Nature. Behold the lightning, it darts harmless upon the clod, which by means of an iron rod we have appointed its grave; listen to the thunder, it is the music of Nature, and tends to terrify none but children; hark to the storm, it vainly roars around our ship, that flies through the heaving billows, and dare only proffer us its wings; look at the sun, it is our torch and must be it, it could not be otherwise, and were we to light its flame ourselves, it could not nearer belong to us than now, when Nature ignites its flame; penetrate the hosts of stars, they but await the hour, when a new invention shall openly expose them to our eyes. Wherever you look, Man is at home. All Nature is his property as far as he conquers her, and to his conquests no limits are set. And though, in an thousandfold manner, he yet be hemmed by the power of the elements, nevertheless the infinite capacity dwells in him to overcome them, and the more he progresses in his development, the more Nature goes at his hand, because she is a whole; and with mankind are at once developed heaven and earth till unto the highest milky-ways and down to the deepest mountain ravines. But where the rude power of the elements still masters Man, where the ocean yet engulphs him and pestilence tears him away: shall he there humble himself before an imaginary master, that oppresses him in the form of the ocean billow and the plag-boil? No and never! He submits, as also must the most pious in spite of his belief, to the unavoidable laws of Nature; as a part of this Nature he consciously fulfils his destiny, and what can thereby happen him worse than — to die?

Pious man, learn to live, and you will know how to die. Learn to become master of your position, and you will know how to remain master of it. Learn truly to be Man, and you will be "God". And if in the law of the development of the world should stand written, what your belief prophecies, and what science deduces, that the earth will once be hurled to fragments, still therein lies no ground for Man to lose his selfconsciousness as part and his bearing as Lord of the world. As individual man lays down in a grave of the earth, so may all mankind together with the earth plunge in a grave of the world. They only thus furnish the material for a higher continuation of the world-life. And of this, Man should be afraid?

*Sifractus illabitur orbis, impavidum
feriunt ruinae!*



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